

THE COLONIES

AND

THE CANNON STREET MEETINGS.

"No great political improvement, however plausible or attractive it may appear, can be productive of lasting benefit, unless it be preceded by a change of public opinion, and every change of public opinion must be preceded by a change of knowledge."—

BUCKLE.

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The following Letters appeared in the "European Mail," in harmony with the object of that journal, to communicate information to the Colonies of the British Empire. As now republished, they may serve the purpose of recording some phases of an agitation which, being both new and strange, excited much temporary interest, and which, may appear in other times, if not in more important aspects.

LETTER I.

LONDON, *December 27th*, 1869.

SIR,—With your permission, I venture to form an estimate of the progress lately made in colonial reform, and what may be yet accomplished. From such an effort, perhaps, good may result, if not to those at home, at least to those who may zealously follow the movement in the Colonies. It is of the first importance that they should form accurate opinions, and know precisely the true aspect of the question, especially through the operations and influence of the famous Cannon Street Meetings. Not that the reverse of this is to be feared from newspaper reports or articles, for almost every important journal has ceased to detail the proceedings, and the only notices that appear deprecate, if not ridicule, the agitation. This arises from many circumstances, not the least being that the agitation has an unfortunate party-political bearing. The Conservative press wish to tack on the “colonial cry” to other watchwords now most industriously sought for; but no leading statesman higher than Lord John Manners has publicly identified himself with such an unworthy proceeding, believing doubtless in the wise statement that the only safe ground is to treat colonial questions “as entirely freed from the fetters of home parties; not as topics of the day, but questions of the future.”

There has been some sort of recognition at the

meetings of these principles, but they have not been kept strictly to the front. The preliminaries, indeed, were ill defined. Haste, indecision, want of preparation, were early manifested. In England, as in Victoria, Mr. Edward Wilson is known as a high-minded, patriotic man—truly noble, eager for usefulness—and aiming at no small distinctions. His letter to the *Times*, now widely circulated, was allowed to appear only to receive an unanswerable rebuke in an article clear and to the point. Whether the meetings were determined upon before or after the publication of that letter now matters little, it being certain that there has been in connection with it a concurring force to be watched in its rise, progress, and effects. This is the only true method of understanding the position into which things have been drifting. Mr. Wilson, then, became originator, the first spokesman, the chief oracle of the agitation. His sympathies—large, spontaneous, and earnest—were moved by the New Zealand troubles. He was goaded by various species of indifference, departmental or public, on emigration, on postal reform, on economic principles being too closely applied to young countries. He called to his aid spirits of less doubtful character; some discontented officials who are known to be among the “irreconcilables” of the Colonial Office; others who are prone to weak, rapid, but unfortunately very regular appearances at almost every public gathering; and some there were who aspired to be leaders when nature intended them for disciples, to deport themselves humbly, feed sparingly on the diet of intellectual giants, and not rush in “where angels fear to tread.” From such a motley gathering little

was to be expected. Little, indeed, has been the result ! Mr. Wilson, better as a writer than a speaker, certainly laid down a reasonable programme for discussion ; but there were no resolutions, no practical tendencies, no course of action proposed ; nothing, in fact, approaching statesmanship, or even a policy shadowed forth or suggested. Other and worse blunders were committed, such as quoting from private letters, which improperly garbled and twisted Lord Granville's conversations ; parading the New Zealand troubles when they should have been kept in subordination to the general principles, and proclaiming that the Gladstone-Granville Ministry ought to be impeached for even breathing dismemberment or disintegration of the Empire. Forgetful of all preceding policy, that self-government in the Colonies has been moulded and shaped ; that it has developed its own difficulties, and that much patient study will be required to maintain union throughout a large, scattered, and heterogeneous race—the speakers wandered far and wide from the subjects ; irregularity reigned triumphant, and there was the barest amount of order in the meetings.

At an early stage it was observed that the Chairman was not weighty enough for his office. Without the prestige of either name or position, unknown to the public generally, he was, of course, judged "on his merits ;" and his lead from meeting to meeting was little else than an empty unmeaning sound. Unskilled in debate himself, he had no power of controlling others ; he failed in appreciating the true points in the day's business ; his calls to "order" or admonitions as to "time" often proved ineffective ; and

even in taking the sense of a meeting he was so little trained as to allow the speakers to drift into inextricable confusion between motions, amendments, and substantive motions, producing a painful sense of weariness and exhaustion to those who require the power and force of a predominant mind, and understand its necessity for moulding into shape the rough materials brought together in any public movement. Of course, something else than a Speaker of the House of Commons was looked for; even a less skilled chairman than George Wilson of the Anti Corn Law League would have been tolerated; but an experience was soon gained with regard to Mr. Youl that disqualified him for such prominence. Your readers in the Colonies must believe that in this description I "nothing extenuate nor set down aught in malice;" but no precision of character was given to the mere debates, apart altogether from the actual results that have to be considered.

At almost every meeting Sir George Grey, the late Governor of New Zealand, was present—often eloquent, even if the matter was a little strained; active, intelligent, furtive in his glances, somewhat suspicious of his own movements, but enjoying the novelty of a position which brought him into direct antagonism to his old chiefs in Downing Street! He, however, neither led nor controlled; did not appear thoroughly to identify himself with the movement, and, I should think, was quite disposed to believe that crudeness and incompleteness attached, if not to every speech, certainly to every motion submitted to the meeting. After Sir George, there was very little support from the ordinary attendants. On each occasion there was heard some orator,

burning with the fire of "old Erin," or wisely sententious with the cautious shrewdness of a "canny Scot." In fact, never did I attend without being struck that the various elements might be compared to the empire at large—strangely constituted, representing every interest, leagued together by no common sentiment; but all men in opposition contributing a grievance for discussion, as well as strengthening the family of nations; great in small communities, almost nothing in a large society; perhaps statesmen for a parish in population, certainly unknown units in London; that each man had better again get into harness for the work of true colonising, leaving the subject in the hands of those who understand statecraft, and are able to apply great principles to the public advantage.

And this brings me to the actual business of these meetings, which, in reality, may be said to have originated with Mr. Westgarth and Mr. Beaumont, the former well known in Australian circles, the latter an ex-Chief Justice of British Guiana. The men are as unlike as possible: one anxious not to be too prominent, the other bold and fearless; but each determined to strive for mastery, or the "vantage ground" in the movement. I confess to experiencing a sense of relief when Mr. Westgarth "tabled" the resolutions of which he is the author—skilfully drawn, committing the meeting to good common-place sense, and really doing no disservice either to the Colonies or to the integrity of the empire. They are worthy of study as being the embodied sense of those first active in the agitation. They should, however, be regarded as "feelers" towards gauging public opinion, a groping

after that which, in American language, is called a "platform." Their real aim was administrative reform rather than organic change; not to demolish, but to reconstruct; to elicit public attention to the Colonies so as to enforce direct responsibility upon the executive; also to apply the principle of an indissoluble bond of union between those who have a common origin, a future of high purpose and great usefulness which must not be weakened or allowed to drift into danger. The resolutions had their defects in platitude of sentiment; a little "fine-wire drawing" about the *regimes* past and present in Colonial government; a painful parade of the old New Zealand difficulty; but the germs of good sense and sound policy were to be discerned even in the attack upon the Under Secretary of the Colonial Office, which might make the Secretary of State himself sensitively alive to his duties and responsibilities. But what shall be said of the author of these resolutions? He was present to move the first, some one else moved the second, and the third was proposed amidst no end of trouble and doubt by Mr. Edward Wilson. At such a rate of progress there was little probability of getting through the rest earlier than the meeting of Parliament, when public attention would be greatly diverted to very different if not more important subjects. But worse results arose from Mr. Beaumont being allowed to interpose not a "thin end of the wedge," but one massive, cumbrous, burdened with more platitudes, leading away to new projects—emigration, parliamentary committees, royal commissions, the "evoking" upon a large scale of public opinion, and hereafter a "National and Colonial Emigration League!" I am amazed that at

the fifth meeting such a diversion was allowed, portending no good, and opening up fruitful subjects of dissension and differences, threatening dismemberment of the colonists themselves in their efforts to preserve integrity and to secure attention to their grievances. I often looked on at these discussions to remind myself of the fine old sentiment, "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." But do the colonists evince this unity? Have they made a clear case for their own comprehension? Do they truly understand what they want, the manner for asserting their grievances, the practical reforms within their power to attain, or that of the Imperial Government to grant? For my part I had at one time a faint idea that there might have been something shaped and fashioned in a committee of strong-minded men, possessed of clear ideas and having power in thought and language; colonists who might be embryo statesmen, with determined will and a resolution to be heard, who could make a public opinion for themselves, and enlist warm sympathies for a grand subject, capable of being made much of in its novelty and freshness; but, alas! the realization is far from warranting any other feeling than that of disappointment, failure and defeat, which, it is thought, now attends this ill-conceived, badly-managed, and absolutely futile movement.

Never was this more apparent than at the meeting, when Mr. Beaumont submitted his resolutions. In his speech introducing them he stated, forsooth, that there was a relation between those resolutions, and the deputation to Lord Granville, and the newspaper hostility! That, as martyrs, the "Junta," as he

called the agitators, would thrive on persecution, on ridicule, on opposition! That out of tribulation success would be achieved! He attempted invective, sarcasm, eloquence — perhaps in one or other of these lines he might have succeeded, but the speech, though briefly reported, took one hour and three quarters in delivery! It exhausted the meeting, then the chairman, and when at last the speaker was interrupted by calls of “time, time,” the fire of his eloquence was damped, and the meeting was prepared to think the resolution would never be submitted. But will Mr. Beaumont rise to any superior position as a leader? His style is not without merit. His manner is remarkably decisive; there is an effort after exhausting subjects, crushing opponents, using all sorts of weapons in debate. But his mind is aggressive, not suggestive; he is full of knack, not of genius. The solid lawyer, the nice logician, the careful debater, the wary politician, are features not yet discovered in his character, while there is an overweening love for his own opinions, which obtrudes upon the patience of those whose hours cannot be devoted to “great set orations,” and who within a business day want clear, short, practical, measures, which will produce substantial results. It will never do to continue such meetings; it will never do to tolerate such a meaningless debating club about colonial empire; and it will never do to let the great theme of its future connection with the parent state be dragged into ridicule, contempt, and disgrace.

To sum up the results of the movement thus far, it cannot be boasted that there has been any success achieved with Lord Granville: nor with other eminent

men; nor with the newspapers; nor with the general public. It is already clear that the Colonial Conference announced for February will never be held. In fact, Lord Bury has, at the mere dread of such a conference, withdrawn from the chairmanship of the committee appointed to bring it about. It is certain that other satellites of the Court or Ministry will follow his bright example. But they might wait for the Colonies to pronounce its fate, for notwithstanding the weak meaningless despatches quoted by Mr. Youl, there are now reaching England unmistakeable signs of a healthy public opinion in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, that no conference will be assented to by those Colonies. The "scheme is simply impossible," says one authority. "We are well satisfied with things as they are," asserts a powerful journal; "It is considered quite impracticable and useless," is the opinion of another eminent publicist. So from one colony after another the voice of common sense prevails to discourage and condemn the project. What, then, are the results? A good letter from Sir Henry Drummond Wolff about colonial Government; an excellent suggestion from the Earl of Carnarvon about New Zealand; a most admirable paper from Sir Henry Bartle Frere, showing that India and New Zealand may help each other in a period of warfare; a magnificent development of Earl Granville's character as diplomatist and statesman; and above all, healthy, vigorous, refreshing proofs, abundantly afforded, that England and the Colonies are necessary for each other; that there is no wish on either side for separation; and that when real tangible difficulties shall arise, there is head and heart enough

among the good men of all parties at home and in every settlement to adjust difficulties, to heal differences, and and to preserve long and peaceful relations with mutual advantage. I think Lord Granville was well informed that there has "always been considerable jealousy in the Colonies of the colonists residing in this country," and I am sure this jealousy will be wisely manifested if these meetings are not allowed to continue, and this senseless agitation is not permitted to disturb the prosperity and happiness of a great and flourishing empire.

LETTER II.

LONDON, *January 22nd*, 1870.

SIR,—The subsequent movements at the Cannon Street Meetings have been unique and conclusive; characteristic of men who, in beating a retreat, have left the line of march open to their pursuers; their last public record being virtually a registration of their weakness, their incapacity, and their extinction. Yet, in the words of Mr. W. E. Forster, at Bradford, when speaking of the movement, "I rejoice that the question has been brought forward, inasmuch as it has made it clear to me that neither in England nor in the Colonies do we intend that the Empire shall be broken up."

The proof of this was being amply furnished when my last letter was concluded. Immediately after its

publication, there came from almost every Colony unquestionable signs that the agitation was not even "plausible or attractive;" that instead of it being "preceded by a change in public opinion," it had outrun the bounds of prudence or expectation; that it was far from being "productive of lasting benefit;" that, in fact, disloyalty, mischief, and disaffection were being attempted, alien alike to the temper and genius of the great English community. These points, in fact, were developed during a brief interval in the meetings allowed for the Christmas holidays. The result was a meagre attendance at the sixth meeting: few of the more prominent characters were present except Mr. Wilson; so that a field day was allowed to minor celebrities, who made good use of their opportunities, and who really cropped up in tolerable profusion. The precedence was again, of course, in Mr. Beaumont's favour, who became positively prolix, tiresome, verbose—never more full of reiteration "hammered on the ear"—until he must have convinced himself that he had a new audience who knew not the Beaumont of earlier meetings, who never before had listened to his arguments or followed his elaborate eloquence. An hour or more of oration, and his resolutions were fairly launched. But, to the consternation of those present, there then sounded from the end of the room occupied by the chairman, and the *crème de la crème*, a voice shrill, loud, and startling; raised in the highest key, by one ready to burst at every vein, and subject to no ordinary excitement. He maintained that all the meetings had been a farce; that a wrong method had from the

first been pursued; that the whole business had been brought into ridicule; that those then present, they themselves—chairman, promoters, speakers—were all the objects of public scorn and derision. The thing wanted—what must be insisted on before going further—was, a motion for “a name, a home, and a fund.” The gentleman, thus relieved of his burden of thought and speech, produced an adverse effect; there were painful glances interchanged, some thinking that the truth was not far absent even if strangely rendered, others believing that the bubble was approaching its true and legitimate end, and some were evidently determined to appease the storm which was thus raised. It might have been policy to tone away the asperities felt towards Mr. Beaumont, the most miserable of offenders; but was it prudent for one speaker after another to hurry towards the *dénouement*, to carry his resolutions, to praise him as their leader, to follow him into the wilderness, and in the end make themselves scapegoats for his transgressions?

Thus was the end approached. The programme adopted was greeted by the originators of the movement as a lucky means of escape, and made the basis of future proceedings. There were hurry and confusion in beginning the meetings; there were the same scenes in closing them. The only practical point laid down failed in its object, for I believe it is a fact that the committee have never met for real business. One of the proposed members has seceded, another contemplates returning to the Colonies, and the so-called “Emigration League” has been virtually superseded by a new and stronger candidate for public favour.

At the close of these meetings there was painful evidence of non-success, for on leaving Cannon Street a significant announcement appeared in a placard posted at the entrance to the room, that the "hat was sent round" for contributions towards the expenses. A subscription list was opened; but "few and far between" were the contributors—barely sufficient for the purpose of defraying the cost of the rooms; nothing for printing, for the advertisements, or the many incidental items at all times inevitable for such purposes. On the following Wednesday the rooms were closed! "Ichabod" was on the lintels! The place that "once knew them, knew them no more" from that time thenceforward! Truly an inglorious result, but natural to the gatherings—an inevitable termination to such immature proceedings!

I may now appropriately review the conclusions arrived at by the Colonial reformers, keeping in view that the whole business rests upon Mr. Beaumont's resolutions. Not to discuss how far they are better or worse than Mr. Westgarth's propositions, they shall be taken simply on their own merits. It will be necessary to examine the resolutions *seriatim*, and then take the following observations by way of a running commentary, not merely as an individual opinion, but as the general convictions arrived at by the voice of public opinion.

1. The privileges of British subjects are fully and impartially upheld in favour of all residents in the Colonies. The rights of naturalisation are conferred; the German emigrants are admitted to these rights in Canada, in Australia, in New Zealand; and no family

or congregation of men ever settle in any colony but they enjoy all the advantages of Englishmen. But do they discharge all the obligations of Citizenship? Do they add to Imperial strength—the power and importance of the Empire? It is notorious that in no State, whatever its age or wealth, is the right of freemen more readily granted than in the British Colonies: the emigrants from all countries and whatever their condition, may, and do, achieve the highest offices of State. In a word, throughout all colonial possessions there is the freest scope allowed to the ambition, the hopes, and the aspirations of men, apart from the trammels of caste, religion, or creed.

2 Emigration is as largely encouraged by the British Government as is consistent with the obligations towards its own interests. It is a mistake to assume that this is a one-sided question; for there are duties the Colonies should discharge concurrently with those discharged by England. If there is over population in one case, there are unbounded resources in the other; the exigencies on one side can be met by the surplus on the other side; and the laws of supply and demand have to be steadily observed. It is also obvious that in the territories to be peopled, attractions should be offered in the way of settlement, such as assisted passages for families, free lands for those who can cultivate or occupy, and where labour is applied it should be rewarded by advantages neither sparsely granted nor grudgingly bestowed, to all men who readily and willingly work out their own redemption. But have the Colonies admitted these concurrent claims and advantages? Do they maintain the right of the emigrants to the unappropriated lands?

Will they mortgage their splendid possessions for the welfare of the race from which they have sprung—"bone of their bone, sinew of their sinew?" Where are now the evidences that they honestly apply the proceeds of the land sales or raise emigration funds? Or that they have committees for introducing labour, for extending population, for facilitating the occupation of property, for rendering cheap and easy the settlement upon the land conveyed to them by the Crown? Do they not raise the cry, "Australia for the Australians;" "Canada for the Canadians;" "New Zealand for those who are now in occupation?" In short are they helping in a true and earnest spirit the work committed to their charge, the inheritance they occupy, the splendid advantages conferred upon them when free governments were granted? These involve reciprocal duties, which to forget or neglect is alike wilful and culpable, sure to recoil on both parties to the compact, who ought to recognise no ties but those of mutual interest, equal obligations and advantages which will make all members of the body politic "wax and wane together."

3. To raise the cry of "separation" is a flagrant absurdity, or, in the words of the resolution, a greater "capital injury" than the evasion of those duties attaching to the Colonies, and arising out of the advantages which belong to free constitutions. Nothing approaching separation has ever been entertained in England, much less seriously attempted. It is a device of the malcontents, who are not to be reconciled or appeased; in fact, of those who, having small grievances, wish to raise large issues, in order to gratify their own selfish purposes, or indulge in private revenge for imaginary wrongs.

4. This is not an opportune period to urge "relative rights and obligations" which in no sense have been disturbed or are jeopardised by wrongs on the one hand or menaces on the other, for never were these rights or obligations better preserved or upheld. There is no real nor practical grievance to complain of by the free and independent Colonies; and even the Crown Colonies have nothing to urge which is not easily redressed through the press or Parliament. There may be questions of internal defence or government to settle, but any difficulties which exist may be ascribed to the fact that

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new ;"

that men are slow to appreciate their privileges, and know not how to exercise the liberty they enjoy. They have power to tax, to create and to degrade high officials; to enter into and break contracts; to make capital for themselves, by bringing out loans, pledging their future for their present gains; to impose burdens "grievous to be borne" on posterity; to do either noble or ignoble things for those who do them "suit and service." It is not necessary to inquire whether they use or abuse this liberty. They are their own masters, amenable to nothing but public opinion, which, more in small than in large communities, is of a variable and uncertain quality, guided by narrow prejudices, subject to interested motives, rarely created by any deep-rooted sentiments, and still less actuated by lofty or impartial principles.

5. If any inquiry be made by a Parliamentary Committee or Royal Commission, there can be no

retracing the history of emancipation or cancelling the independence of the Colonies. I trust, indeed, that the House of Commons will rigidly avoid interference, in the same sense that legislation is rarely, if ever, resorted to in matters of Church discipline, in the affairs of parish vestries, or of municipal boroughs. Having completely recognised self-government as the course for the Colonies, there are principles to follow that, if infringed upon or invaded, will lead to real mischief by disturbing that progression in independence which all public bodies should study to accomplish. There must be no appeal to higher powers to control their proceedings, to settle their differences, or to act as arbitrator upon inevitable difficulties. All these they must surmount for themselves, unless they are prepared to sacrifice some of those rights and privileges which are the inheritance they are responsible for to a distant posterity. At this stage in the history of the British Colonies, there is no accumulation of grievances to require investigation; few, if any, administrative wrongs that Downing Street can be charged with or which Parliament ought to redress; and whatever may be the intercolonial questions now pending, they can form no subject of sound reference; as no Imperial legislation can, with any permanent benefit, be attempted for their settlement.

6. I am equally strong in the conviction that public opinion in this country will not be judiciously appealed to in the interests of the Colonies if the present "meddlers and muddlers" have the direction of any subsequent movements that may be contemplated by their own—or shall I say Mr. Beaumont's?—resolutions. The times

and seasons will come when, without passion or excitement, true, earnest, clear-brained men may take up the subject with real advantage; when calm and judicious inquiries may be conducted by those who

“ Live to clutch the golden keys,
To mould a mighty State's decrees,
And shape the whisper of a throne; ”

and when their measures, arranged in harmony with sound principles and constitutional maxims, shall carry forward this great empire in the glorious career that it has been accomplishing, slowly but surely, of enlarging the boundaries of liberty, increasing the blessings of an industrial commerce, and maintaining throughout the wide world that good laws, a sound literature, and a pure religion, are the true foundations of a nation's happiness.

LETTER III.

LONDON, *February 16th*, 1870.

SIR,—I should regret taking leave of the agitators on the Colonial question without endeavouring to trace both the causes of their failure, and the results that have accrued from their movements. I shall exclude all personal considerations, which can now be done with advantage from the free handling already given to the leaders and their disciples in following their speeches and resolutions.

Failure, then, has been most prominent from the fact of the Colonies not being authoritatively represented. This, indeed, was shown in the incipient

stages of the movement, at the time when every advantage was taken of the New Zealand difficulties. Men were running to and fro, sowing seeds of discord, making political capital for themselves, exaggerating the Maori troubles, and impugning the very loyalty of the colonists. A notable illustration characterised this epoch. The Secretary of State was solemnly informed, in language begotten of groundless fear, and dictated by restless ambition, that "if the troops were withdrawn, the blood of thousands of his fellow-countrymen might be at his door, and England might witness the destruction of a thriving colony." This information came from an authority of less than three months' residence in New Zealand! He was then prominent in hostility to Colonial Office policy and discipline. The same witness having imbibed lessons in panic from club-house gossip, seriously endeavoured to prove that, unless the requirements of the local politicians were granted, New Zealand would declare its independence of the British Crown, and offer allegiance to the United States! Lord Granville, however, wisely declared that "Her Majesty's Government felt bound to measure the real importance" of the subject, "not by the statements which they receive from private informants in this country, however worthy of credit, but by the deliberate acts of the Government and Legislature, who alone in this respect can effectually represent the colonists." Throughout the recent discussions there was the same necessity for ascertaining the genuine and recognised opinions of those holding local power. All knew that the colonists themselves were not speaking, nor their representatives,

nor their agents, nor, in fact, anyone having a delegated authority. A worse misfortune was that the "reformers" assumed a power of which they were ultimately deprived. The fact that they were not even thanked for their self-imposed labours, is significant of unappreciated service; only ridicule, snubbing, and rebuke have flowed from those who should have evinced gratitude. In charity, it may be asserted that the Cannon Street councillors proved themselves in advance of their times; but that their zeal was misplaced is now clearly shown by the absolute repudiation of both their words and actions in almost all the colonies. New Zealand, foremost throughout the agitation, is now in the position of realizing Mr. Fitzgerald's noble advice, that the colony "would do well and wisely to rely upon herself alone, because the duty of self-defence is a world-wide obligation among all nations and in all time." So it is with other colonies. Australia at large repudiates the vague sentiment of leaning upon the United Kingdom in mere local difficulties, and scorns the interference of those who, without authority, attempt to represent large and important interests, involving solemn questions of Imperial magnitude. In Canada, more than all, it has been shown there is a frank and noble recognition of the subject, needing no reference beyond their own legally-constituted assemblies, it being inconsistent with the rights of the colony to delegate its charter of liberty, its independence, and its future welfare to any representatives, except under careful instructions, and with a well-matured conviction that mischief and disaster will not be the consequence.

Again, in no sense has the recent failure been more complete than in overlooking the establishment of free Governments, and the practical effects secured to the colonies. It has been forgotten that each is, in reality, independent, has its destiny in its own hands, its statesmen and people competent to judge of their interests, and of the course best calculated to secure or conciliate those interests. Let this position be compared with that occupied less than thirty years since. Then Lord John Russell or Earl Grey presided at the Colonial Office, and were able to enforce a policy long binding upon the statesmen subsequently in power. There was, however, a "Mr. Mother-Country," of whom there is little remembrance in this generation. He was the incarnation of centralized government, an irrepressible power in producing discontent and misrule in every colony. Without assuming the airs of dictation, "Mother-Country" ruled cabinets and senate; passed or vetoed Acts of Parliament; determined the course of public opinion, by publishing or withholding despatches. In him was vested the authority "to which was committed that last appeal from the Colonies themselves, which was dignified with all those vague phrases about the power, the honour, the supremacy, and the wisdom of the Mother-Country." This mysterious influence has lately been again introduced to the public by the *Times*. How few know anything of "Mother-Country!" And how carefully the editor wishes him avoided in this discussion! But to those who have to contrast the present condition of the Colonies with that of former days, the withdrawal of "Mr. Mother-Country" is sufficient to produce

a deep sense of gratitude. There is now no meddling, interfering, or repressive government. It has given place to a self-governing, free, and uncontrolled system, in which the full fruition of perfect liberty is enjoyed, and the noblest prerogatives of freeborn Englishmen can be asserted. In failing to recognise the advantages of the modern system, there is the danger of reverting to the rule either of despotism or dogmatism, for such would be the inevitable effect of the references to councils; of the appeals to central authority; the necessity for Imperial control, either actual or implied. Mutual annoyance, if not disgust, would be the result of such complicated authority. And it may be enquired, would the Colonies yield obedience, gain advantages, or secure anything which is not otherwise attainable?

The inherent vices of councils and conferences have also been forgotten by those who have advocated them as means for improving the relations between the Colonies and Great Britain. Let the Œcumenical Council, with its lengthened sittings and its powerless decrees be excluded from consideration, but what shall be said of our own Pan-Anglican Synod? Did any respectable advantages accrue to Church or State? Think of the lay conferences, of the conferences of deputies of the three denominations, of conferences about education, of reform in Parliament. They one and all produce nausea to minds that know how measures of great public import are moulded—how the Council of the Empire consolidates power, secures influence, and obtains concurrence to its proceedings—how that constitution has been shaped, which our

modern poet well describes when speaking of England :—

“ A land of settled government,
A land of just and old renown,
Where Freedom broadens slowly down
From precedent to precedent.
Where faction seldom gathers head,
But, by degrees to fulness wrought,
The strength of some diffusive thought
Hath time and space to work and spread.”

Nor can the Colonies themselves have faith in conferences. The examples before them are of the postal conference in Melbourne, which recommended measures that were never adopted ; and of the conference in Sydney upon customs' duties, that settled no new policy, and defined no boundaries for common action. A conference may, upon one-sided questions, such as the abolition of the Corn-laws, or the adoption of Free-trade principles, when policy is clearly defined, prescribe a course of action so as to arouse agitation, and convince public opinion in such a manner as shall ensure success ; but the same materials can never determine vexed questions of State rights, the limits of constitutional power, the necessities of external or internal defence, the boundaries of principle and action for a colony to observe, or when imperial duties are to be recognised or withheld.

I will not dwell upon the minor mistakes, such as the indecision of plan—whether confederation should or should not be advocated, whether representation should be by agents or diplomatists. It is now open to demonstration that the most flagrant error was in adopting a tone of mind and indulging in expressions which assumed that the great statesmen and the public

mind of England were inimical to the Colonies—that separation was a foregone conclusion, dismemberment of empire a sentiment cherished, advocated, and promoted in every possible manner! The Earl of Carnarvon, with some leanings towards the recent agitation, mildly exposes the “misunderstandings,” asserting that those connected with some colonies “complained of a coldness,” while “gentlemen who represent other colonies said there was too much interference with them.” But this is too mild, for there was a thorough outspoken, undisguised determination to make the most of the doctrine of separation, it being carried to the length of, positively, almost wilfully misquoting, garbling, perverting the sense—often the words—of Lord Granville, and the officials at Downing Street. The fact can only be accounted for on the ground of injured pride or disappointed ambition, which had adopted the conviction of great services to be rendered where none, in fact, were wanted; of burning patriotism, glowing with laudable zeal for distant tribes and possessions when there was no grievance to redress, no injustice to remedy, no reform to accomplish. It would now serve no good purpose to collate the speeches in order to weed out inflammatory sentiments or revolutionary doctrines; but there were orations fit for the Fenian brotherhood, while pamphlets, articles in newspapers, and essays in magazines have abounded with passion, and prejudice, and party spirit, to excite hostility and satisfy personal revenge. It is gratifying to know that the wisdom of Parliament will dispel the illusions about “disintegration,” if any have been created,—indeed the House of Lords has

done itself honour by calm, statesmanlike addresses, which will convince the Colonies that it is unwise to indulge in raving abuse when there are grave questions to be solved—not in hatred or ill-will, or even in coolness of relationship: but in a manner suitable to the progress, the new doctrines, the perfectly novel duties that self-government has developed.

What is a colony? The question has yet to be determined. A colony is not a mere "plantation" in the sense which Bacon describes, a thing to regard like a child whose habitation has to be built, whose food has to be provided, whose government has to be controlled. It is not simply a state such as that described by Charles Buller in his masterly speech on systematic colonisation, "that must contain some at least of all the elements that go to make up home in England." Nor is a colony "a vast tract of fertile desert" entailing a heavy cost for the honour of empire, such as Sir William Molesworth used to denounce, but which, had he lived, he would doubtless have admired and honoured, and helped well and wisely to govern. The colonies, as a whole, have grown mightily since his time. We now have different views of their importance and influence; hold to stern duties as to their government; and recognise an ever-widening force as to their future power, their relations with England and other countries the wide world over. What, then, is a colony? It is not a dependency to be helped in some senses, checked in others, but controlled in all its highest and most important operations. A colony is a state holding together the most restless, determined, vigorous men of our times. Each expedition that has left these shores has

become an epitome of that society which makes up the parent stock; and, in the spirit of the old Grecian colonisers, every band has "borne with it the image of its country's god to link it for ever, by a common worship, to its ancient home." A colony represents, not only the religion, but the commerce, the conquering civilisation, the aggressive force in morals, in politics, in art, in science—which constitute the greatness and glory of this age. A colony is a great progressive instrument towards subduing and utilising the earth for man's use and comfort; each one being established, developed, and matured as the necessities of the parent state demand or its own internal force requires. With the condition and rate of colonial progress for the first half of the century we have nothing to do; but, like the world generally, the Colonies have moved with giant strides since 1850. The gold discoveries, the influence of free trade, the freedom of Governments, have given an impetus which advances them at once to the foremost position of a power in the world; when it is no longer wise to regard them as other than full grown, responsible, self-governing states. As states they must think through accredited representatives; act by properly delegated agents; each in turn reflecting the policy, the influence, the power of their country. As states they must guide their own affairs, be responsible for the part they play in the world's history; exercise a mission for weal or woe on future generations. As states they must control and direct, not only their internal, but their external affairs; rising or falling in estimation like older countries, by the patriotism of their public men, the grandeur of their works and the

nobility, the disinterestedness, and the purity displayed. More than all, as states they must surmount their own difficulties, and adapt their institutions to the wants, necessities, and wishes required by their particular position.

Now, if this be the true view of a colony, it follows that the duties and obligations must be handled in a practical manner with the prescience and power of statesmen. It will not be wise to include before their time questions such as attention has been drawn to in the recent circulars to the Colonies. Let all consideration of separation from England be dismissed from the mind, and attention given to the following points :—

1. *Internal Development* should be the paramount principle of action, including the careful administration of the lands; a wise system of taxation; the diffusion of knowledge; the abolition of all effete and worn-out institutions which arrest progress in the old countries, but the removal of which should prove in the best sense that the Colonies are the schools for testing theories and practising the arts that have yet to advance the world.

2. *Defence*, as a question of internal regulation, will always adapt itself to the growing power of the Colonies. Where there is wealth, protection will follow; and where ordinary self-love exists, defence is sure to accompany the sentiment. The militia of Canada, the volunteers of Victoria, the contingent force of New Zealand, are healthy, vigorous symptoms, added to which, the naval armaments of Victoria, promise that no weak or pusillanimous dreams belong to the men upon whom action devolves, or those with whom the honor of the rising state is confided.

3. *External Wars* have yet to affect the distant colonies of New Zealand and Australia. The Anglo-Russian war affords no illustration, for it was an isolated war, without power to extend to the high seas, where alone the old race of English politicians believed war was best conducted in "waste, plunder, and destruction." There should be no hesitation in believing that England will cultivate alliances with the Colonies, extend protection when needed, and render assistance worthy of her great renown and her past history.

4. *Absolute representation* will only be secured through high-minded men being selected for particular missions, leaving mercantile business to men of commerce. The higher walks of politics, diplomacy, internal rights and duties can only be advanced by the noblest men, those most impartial, the best regulated in temper, discretion and moral influence. In the Canadian Confederation, in the armaments for Victoria, in the retention of military force in New Zealand, special representatives have been selected who have won golden opinions among England's statesmen, and who, it is hoped, have deserved the gratitude of the colonies so represented.

5. *Alliance with England* can be best maintained by ceasing to regard the advice of those who advocate confederation of the colonies, which will have to be classed "among vague poetical dreams and empty aspirations." It is, indeed, a dream to those who fail to observe any similarity of wants or requirements between widely distant and different Colonies, but who do recognise that, with distinct positions, opposing races, and complex institutions, there can be but slight bonds of union, very slender prospects of tangible results or

practical advantages, except where independence exists and different nationalities are developed.

6. *The future prospects* will in this way be dependent on separate rather than on joint action. Colonies like individuals, must stand alone, believe in their own power, their own vitality, their own measure of progress. But if they lean upon each other, difficulties and contentions, and fruitless exertions, will be the result; while the attempt to lean upon England will be to revive party strife, to kindle mistrust, and to feed that discontent and jealousy which must follow disappointment or baffled expectations.

These are among the outer questions which have arisen during the discussion, deserving as much consideration as the circular from Messrs. Youl, Sewell, and Blaine, who abandon the Conference, because it "appears to be unattainable," and they might have added undesirable. Other and wider questions must arise, but let each Colony be true to itself, and sure I am that England will be true to those states which are developing the power and importance of the empire. In time there will be under discussion, by serious and thoughtful men, the question whether the relations can be improved or extended; if not, the young states may still preserve good feelings and kindly inclinations towards England, whose mission is to promote and advance the interests of the Colonies, to feel pride in advancing their welfare, and to rejoice that, under good guidance, the great Anglo-Saxon race must predominate in all good works, and exercise the noblest influence in every quarter of the world open to civilization.

MR. WESTGARTH'S PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS.

" 1. That the Colonies are the source of great commercial and social advantage to the parent country, and largely contribute to the influence and greatness of the Empire.

" 2. That, on the other hand, the rights of Imperial citizenship, Imperial supervision, influence and example, and Imperial commerce and resources, promote all the best interests of the Colonies; and that they, on their part, are not wanting in a loyal appreciation of their beneficial relationship.

" 3. That the practical independence of a representative and responsible local Government, lately conceded to each of the principal Colonies, alike at their own instance, and with the ready concurrence of the Imperial authorities, was most certainly never intended to weaken the connection with the parent state, but, on the contrary, to strengthen it by the increased loyalty and contentment arising from a more suitable political condition; and that in this respect this judicious policy has been attended with complete success.

" 4. That under this new system it is only equitable that these so self-governed colonies should defray entirely their own respective charges; provided always that claims and responsibilities, if any, attaching to the preceding régime be first satisfactorily disposed of; and that this financial independence has, in fact, with a very few exemptions, which it may be hoped are only temporarily such, either been already completely attained, or is just on the eve of attainment.

" 5. That New Zealand is one of these exceptional cases, the preceding régime having bequeathed to it a heritage of costly difficulties with the native question in the northern island; and that the indiscriminate and immediate application of the new policy to that colony's special case is a proceeding at once impolitic and unjust as towards a portion of the common empire, and that threatens, if persisted in, to involve its limited resources in most serious financial difficulties.

" 6. That the late correspondence of Her Majesty's Colonial Secretary on the New Zealand question is most unsatisfactory, not only by a refusal, in terms of most unwonted discourtesy, of the aid of the general Government, in no matter what circumstances applied for, to restore the Queen's authority in the colony, but by the strange doctrine left to be inferred, that rebellion and massacre in one part of the Queen's dominions are no concern of the central power, but only of those of the Queen's subjects who are upon

the spot, and who, whether willing or unwilling, able or unable, are thus left to an enforced discretion in the case.

" 7. That the Colonial Office is not now in consonance with our institutions generally, some reconstruction having become necessary, in the direction of increased publicity and responsibility. As that office now stands, with a vast and diversified correspondence, not systematically published, but only occasionally or partially so, or long after publicity is of much, if any value, the colonial questions that arise from time to time are practically controlled by the permanent under-secretariat—a body wholly unrepresentative, irresponsible, and, in an official capacity, as before the public, unknown; and however unexceptionable in a private and individual capacity, liable to the official bias and prejudice of all long-continued and unchecked authority.

" 8. That in the interests alike of this country and the Colonies, the cause of emigration is one of primary importance; that, although the control and management of the vast Crown domain of the colonial waste lands has, for the convenience and advantage of both parties, been made over to the respective Colonies, these lands are still under the Queen's Government, and are practically as much as ever open to our emigrating countrymen; and that it would well become the Government of this country to consider the means of a more active intervention in the great national concern of emigration."

MR. BEAUMONT'S RESOLUTIONS.

" 1. That as British subjects in the Colonies, no less than those in the mother country, are bound to render, and do willingly render, allegiance to the Crown of England, they are no less entitled to the constitutional rights of British subjects, and that to withhold from them any of such rights which are applicable to their situation, would be a grave offence on the part of any responsible officer of the Crown.

" 2. That it is of the highest importance to the whole empire to encourage emigration to the Colonies, and for this purpose to make much more largely available than hitherto the almost unbounded resources of Great Britain.

" 3. That the separation of the Colonies from the mother-country would be a capital injury to the British nation, and ought not to be contemplated otherwise than as a remote contingency, to be prevented by every legitimate means of policy and statesmanship.

" 4. That in order to guard against such contingency, and to consolidate and perpetuate the essential relations between her

Colonies and Great Britain, it is of urgent importance that the relative rights and obligations of the Imperial and the Colonial Governments be adequately ascertained and defined, with due regard to the just claims of the mother country and of the Colonies; and also that the mutual relations of such Governments be adjusted so as to secure to the Colonies the utmost independence consistent with their various positions, and at the same time to maintain the integrity and to develop for the common good the resources and power of the British Empire.

"5. That to this end it is desirable that the condition and administration of the Colonies be made the subject of solemn investigation and deliberation on the part of the Government acting with the advice of Parliament; and that whether it be conducted by parliamentary Committee or by Royal Commission, the fullest opportunity ought to be ensured to the colonists and their representatives of co-operating in, and being heard upon such inquiry; and also with regard to the measures which may be adopted in pursuance thereof, in order that they may be as satisfactory as possible to the requirements and feelings of the Colonies.

"6. That as there is reason to fear that the policy of the Government is unfavourable to the maintenance and consolidation of the Colonies as integral parts of the British Empire, it is desirable that public opinion and action be evoked upon this momentous subject by holding public meetings, and otherwise as occasion may serve."

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